ABDUR RAHMAN-I

THE FALCON OF SPAIN

AHMAD SAEED



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KARACHI — HYDERABAD — LAHORE
MANGLA — RAWALPINDI — PESHAWAR

1970

1st Edition 1500

Printed and Published by A. Hameed Khan at Ferozsons Ltd.,
365, Circular Road, Lahore

Dedicated to

MY CHILDREN

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FOREWORD

When Europe was plunged in darkness, it was Spain that showed it the light of knowledge and enriched it with its ever-lasting culture.

The foundations of such a glorious period were laid by Abdur Rahman I, the conqueror of Spain, in 756 A.D. During his reign of 32 years he proved to be not only a great warrior but also a man of unique parts: as a statesman, builder, lover of knowledge and beauty he occupies an unparalleled place in world history.

This book is an attempt to introduce him to both the general reader and younger generation.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCING SPAIN

It is strange that Islamic civilization spread east and west from Arabia at about the same time, that is, round about the year 700 AD. It is still more amazing to find that in two different continents of Asia and Europe, they did not take long to take root, their trees growing and flowering so as to give a new and fresh fragrance. In both India and Spain, Muslim rule lasted nearly eight hundred years.

Most of us know how Islam came to India and gave this country a new, memorable civilization—the Indo-Mughal one—a combination of

those of India and Mughals. But, unfortunately, most of us have comparatively little knowledge of the Muslim civilization, resulting from Muslim rule in Spain. Abdur Rahman I, Spain's Umayyad ruler (756-788), the greatest of all Muslim rulers of Spain, has compelled the praise of even the worst critics of Muslim conquest of that country. Abdur Rahman was not only a great warrior but, much more, a great man. In his reign, Spain reached the height of its glory. As the result of it, when Europe was passing through dark ages, Spain was leading it as the most advanced country in the world. How Abdur Rahman reached there from Arabia and rose as ''a young, ambitious'' man, ''full of confidence in his destiny" and became immortal, requires a brief introduction about Spain.

In 409 AD some German tribes entered and occupied Spain, thereafter attacking and looting Rome. Then the faith of the Spaniards was Christianity. As against them, the invaders, though Christians, believed in unitarianism, a kind of oneness of God. Both sects were ever fighting with each other, and were corrupt. The kings of Spain were Catholic, so narrow-minded and cruel that they meted out most inhuman treatment to the Jews and followers of other Christian sects. The Jews existed in a large number in Spain, but the Christian kings wanted to wipe them out. They were so intolerant that they forced them either to embrace Christianity or marry a Christian woman so that in course of time the Christian population increased. Those who refused to do so were heavily teased and

punished. Both the church and the king joined hands to seize the property of Jews, enslave them, and separate Jew children from their parents. In 616 AD king Sisebart, known as a learned man, showed such treatment. As a result, the Jews were partly responsible for the downfall of the Visigothic kingdom.

It was during the last Spanish king Wamb's reign that the Arabs in pursuit of Spanish ports first attempted an invasion of Spain. They had been encouraged by the conquest of Balearic islands, not far from Spain, following it up with an unsuccessful attack on Ceuta, the largest city on the Moroccan coast. For they had already captured Tangier in 707 AD.

An interesting decisive event is worth mentioning in this connection.

It was a custom among nobles of those days to send their daughters to the court for training in culture. Florinda, beautiful daughter of one Count Julian, Governor of the Spanish province of Ceuta, thus joined the court of king Roderick, the last Spanish ruler. As he dishonoured Florinda, the latter informed her father of it. Consequently he met the king and cleverly freed her from his clutches.

In the course of his conversation with the count, the king asked him to send him some African falcons. Thereupon the latter replied :

"The next time I return to Spain I promise to bring you some hawks the like of which Your Majesty has never seen."

These "hawks" were none else

but the Moors whom the count went to see immediately on returning to Ceuta. The Moors as well as the Arabs were, shortly after, to answer the invitation of the Spaniards themselves to swoop down upon the country like hawks and falcons!

CHAPTER II

TARIQ THE HAWK

There were small hawks and big hawks—the Arabs and Berbers. The greatest of them all was the famous invader of Spain—General Tariq Ibn Ziad. Before landing on Spain he had to wait for proper time and place. Count Julian, who wanted to take revenge from king Roderick, paved the way for him. For this purpose he befriended Musa Ibn Nusir, Governor of North Africa. The two were first to find a suitable spot for landing the Arab advance troops. The Arab island of Algiers was required by the count to let the hawks move up from across the straits leading to Spain.

In July 710 one of Musa's men quietly landed near the straits. After a furious attack they succeeded in taking away valuable things from around the area, then returning to Morocco. Meantime, General Tariq watched the worsening state of things in Spain and, much more, that of its defences. He noticed their weaknesses by paying quick, repeated visits to discover a link between sea and land from where to launch his big, final attack. It was a mountain, which later came to be known as the "Mountain of Tariq", known in Arabic as Jabrul Tariq but was later distorted as Gibraltar. It was, in fact, this historic rock where he landed his forces on April 30 by means of some big ships provided by Count Julian.

Tariq's movements were so quick and his treatment of the local popu-

lation wilfully so terrible that they surrendered to him without offering any resistance. In the meanwhile Roderick was unaware of his attack. But when he came to know of it and moved southwards to meet Tariq, thousands of Spaniards, including Jews and Visigoths, joined Tariq as their liberator since they had become sick of Roderick's rule. As a result Tariq's combined strength reached twelve and seventeen thousand. As against it, Roderick had nearly one lac army which he led to the mouth of the Barbate River. Near it lay the Cape Trafalgar where not only he was to meet Tariq in a most decisive battle in history but hundreds of years later—in 1805—the English, led by Lord Nelson, were to fight a similar one with the combined

strength of the French and the Spanish navy.

Seeing the overwhelming number of the enemy, Tariq feared lest his men should waver and shrink back. Therefore, he ordered that all the ships be burnt. This was designed to stop any possible flight of his men before the enemy and making them fight with their backs to the wall. This brave, far-sighted deed performed by Tariq has been beautifully commended by Iqbal, the greatest philosopher-poet of the East, as follows in his Persian work, Pyam-i-Mashriq :—

"When Tariq burnt his boats on the banks of Andalus.

His soldiers said that his act was irrational,

For, they added, they were far away from their motherland and as

such how (deprived of their boats) they would be able to get back there.

The abandonment of the prerequisites was impermissible in Islam, they continued.

Tariq smiled and then flourishing his sword, he affirmed:

Every country belonging to my God belongs to me."

A brilliant orator, he then addressed his soldiers in these inspiring words:

"My men, whither can you flee? Behind you lies the sea and before you the foe. You possess only your courage and constancy, for you are present in this country poorer than orphans before a greedy guardian's table. It will be easy to turn this

table on him if you will but risk death for one instant!''

This speech worked like magic. For now Tariq, the hawk, swooped down upon Roderick's army, wiping out whatever was left of it. The king's right wing deserted him at this critical moment and joined Tariq's forces. They did so as they looked upon their liberator or ally, who was a God-send for them, as a means for their release from the miserable life they were leading. Failing to resist Tariq, the king fled the field losing his richly caparisoned white horse in the marshes on his way to Portugal.

With the cooperation of the serfs, the Jews and others, Tariq swept on, taking one fort after another. Count Julian and Mughith the Greek

helped in taking small forts. Cordoba and Toledo, the "Imperial City", specially the latter, offered the greatest resistance. This was because they ware mostly manned by the king's own men. The Jews helped in quick surrender of the city yielding the great supply of arms and provisions for Tariq's army.

Although Tariq was engaged in further conquests, he made a point of giving the finest and clean administration to the people.

The year 712 marks a sad part of Tariq's life for no fault of his. It so happened that he had to ask Musa, the 80-year-old Governor of North Africa, to send him military help to defeat Roderick who was preparing to attack Toledo from the west.

The Governor is said to have

become jealous of Tariq's achievements at such a young age since he was hardly twenty-one when he invaded Spain. In view of this he himself came to Spain with the required help.

He punished Tariq for having disobeyed him by settling down in Spain instead of returning home after raiding it. Tariq took it to heart, since he expected praise for his mighty deeds rather than reprimands by his superior. However this quarrel was soon patched up and the two jointly faced Roderick, killing him in a battle, and captured many other remaining enemy forts.

Musa had conquered Spain by that time and appointed his own sons, too, as Governors of some of the

newly occupied areas. He had been accused of dishonesty by different quarters. As the result of it not only Caliph Walid but his successor, Sulaiman, also disgraced him so much after confiscating his property and ordering death of his son Abdul Aziz almost before his eyes that he met with a most terrible end.

Until Abdur Rahman appeared in Spain, the period following Tariq and Musa's return from there, was marked by some remarkable things. First, Hurr, an Arab General, carried out Musa's idea of entering France in 717-19. He would have succeeded in conquering it but could not do so. This was due to the quarrel among his followers and misrule for lack of an honest and strong Governor. Therefore Hurr had to come back.

Secondly, the Caliph replaced him—Hurr—by another strong, pious Muslim, named Samh Ibn Malik as the new Governor. Samh was both an able administrator and a capable General. He brought about many reforms in the country as well as strengthened its defences, built a grand mosque at Zeragoza. To top all, on the Caliph's orders he caused a many-sided survey to be made of the races, nationalities, geographic and economic conditions of the country. Though hastily done, it was the fore-runner, the first type of Doomsday Book.

Lack of unity, plots and counter-plots by two powerful Muslim Generals, frequent change of Governors, 22 in a period of 45 years since Tariq had invaded Spain, absence of strong

government, combined to undo what good the Muslims had done to its people and Islam itself. As a result there was every danger of its slipping out of hand until Abdur Rahman appeared and stopped the rot.

CHAPTER III

ABDUR RAHMAN'S BIRTH AND EXILE

Grandson of Caliph Hisham, Abdur Rahman was born on March 14, 751, or thereabout, into the unfortunate house of Umayyads. His father was a fearless and capable army officer, the Umayyad prince Mu'awiya. As he died young, when Abdur Rahman was about ten years old, the latter received his early education at the hands of his uncle. With his father, a Syrian and mother, a Maracash, the young lad belonged to two countries as it were, Spain being the one he was destined one day to settle in and become immortal

by making it wonderful in so many ways.

Red-haired and blue-eyed, young Abdur Rahman had one mole on his high cheekbones and one on his back; a big and beautiful head and forehead and supple, well-built body; and, to top all, a very high degree of intelligence. The Caliph had predicted a bright future for this child from early on.

The two houses of Abbasids and Ummeyads had been, tragically, ever at war with each other. Sometimes one had the upper hand, sometimes the other. Many cruelties were committed. In 730 Abdur Rahman's uncle was killed in Egypt and the Abbasids were now bent upon wiping out the last Ummeyads. These were Abdur Rahman and his elder brother, Yahya !

Thirsty after the blood of the Umayyads, the Abbasids had hatched a terrible plot to kill 70 members of the former all together. They invited them to a grand feast, known as the Banquet of Jaffa. As the food was poisoned, all the 70 guests, the so-called enemies, died on the spot.

When they learnt that two of their enemies, a great threat to them as either of them was entitled to become Caliph as an Ummeyad were still alive, the Abbasids declared general pardon for those who had opposed them before. In this way they wanted to entrap Abdur Rahman and Yahya. So they left their peaceful village of Zaytun. On being warned by a friend of their family that they would not be spared if they gave themselves up to the enemy by the appointed date at Jaffa, they secretly

moved on towards the left bank of the upper Euphrates. They wished to escape there. For they became sure cf being killed on hearing of the Banquet of Jaffa.

The enemy was on their track. Unfortunately Yahya fell into their hands and, as feared, was killed. Abdur Rahman was saved because he was away ahunting at the time.

Now Abdur Rahman became the head of the family which consisted not only of his four-year old son, Sulaiman, but also wife (details about her are unknown), a young brother and two sisters.

Twenty years old then, he hid them all in an Iraqi village. As he had then some eye-trouble, he shut himself in a room. His little son Sulaiman was playing out of the

house in a street when he saw some horsemen suddenly appear there. He got frightened of them because such men with black banners —the Abbasids—had killed his uncle Yahya before his very eyes. Scared, he rushed back to his father. Trembling, he clung to him. Abdur Rahman, being a remarkably intelligent and alert young man, at once sensed the danger: that the enemy had come to know of their hiding place.

Without losing a moment, he entrusted the little Sulaiman to his sisters, caught his younger brother's hand and dashed out. Before leaving he hurriedly instructed his sisters to send him his Greek freed-man to some hiding in the woods. As he came out he came across the enemy's soldiers. Without losing presence of mind

he threw them some money and made good his escape. To his great good luck they did not recognise him.

The faithful Badr joined the brothers in their hiding-place. When he returned to the village to get them food and help them in their escape, an enemy-slave overheard his talk regarding Abdur Rahman. He informed the enemy about the brothers' hiding-place. Shortly after, they heard the clatter of enemy's horses outside. Therefore they had to run away from there to save themselves.

They made for the river to swim across to safety. At that point it was wide enough to afford them refuge. Abdur Rahman was a muscular boy, and a good sportsman too. He quickly put off his shirt on finding the black-bannered enemy ride towards them.

His brother hesitated in plunging into the river. He also found it difficult to remove his clothes. Abdur Rahman quickly tore them off so that both of them dived into water and began to swim. Meantime from the bank the enemy repeatedly waved and shouted to them, saying, "Return! we mean no harm."

Abdur Rahman's younger brother was taken in by these words. While swimming he asked him to surrender themselves to the enemies as the latter would not do them any harm. But Abdur Rahman did not agree, being sure that they would kill them the moment they fell into their hands. His younger brother had got a bit tired and swept away by the strong current, so that it was difficult for him to reach the bank. Therefore, he swam back to the nearer one tell-

ing Abdur Rahman that they might well believe the enemy. But as soon as he reached the bank, the enemy pounced upon him, cutting off his head. Abdur Rahman saw it with his own eyes, feeling deeply shocked, though not surprised at the enemy's lie. The enemy left his brother's body on the bank, taking away his head as a trophy.

One of the soldiers plunged into the river. Came quite close to him, but Abdur Rahman was too good and tireless a swimmer to be caught by him. On seeing the mole on his back, his uncle had called it a lucky thing. Abdur Rahman met with good luck, indeed, as he escaped from the jaws of death!

Not only this. He returned to southern Syria. There he found refuge in a Bedouin's tent and, much

more, many loyal supporters. As he was a prince of royal blood, they extended him all help. From his mother's side also he got a number of his relatives to support him. Some of his maternal uncles, he recalled, must be in western Egypt to give him warm welcome.

While the faithful Badr joined him in Palestine so as to accompany him as his guard thereafter, his sisters sent him another freed man, Salim, with a purseful of money and precious jewels.

Salim was, no doubt, God-send. He was an experienced guide because he had widely travelled. Having made many journeys to Spain, he was most suitable for Abdur Rahman then to take him there, far away from any danger from the Abbasids. By telling him many interesting

stories of adventure he inspired Abdur Rahman to make plans about his future in Spain.

Thus Abdur Rahman reached North Africa. He was still in danger since the enemy was on his track. Therefore he remained hidden for five years. He hoped to find protection of the Governor who had been a friend of the Umayyads. Strangely enough, this very person was once about to kill him for fear lest he should, one day, prove to be his rival. Though not an Abbasid nor recognising the authority of this house, for the Governer was a Ferhite, he came to have such fear.

A story goes that Abdur Rahman's life was saved by a non-Muslim fortune-teller who had once served his uncle Maslmah, in Damascus. He respected the young prince, feeling

that one day he would meet with great luck. When Abdur Rahman was about to be killed on the Governor's command, the fortune-teller saved his life by pleading with the latter in these words:

"If you kill this lad, then he is, obviously, not the person who is fated to overthrow you, and you will thereby commit a grave injustice. On the other hand, if you are destined to be overthrown, nothing you can do will save you."

Though the Governor let Abdur Rahman live, he beheaded two of his cousins, sons of Caliph Walid II, for having somehow insulted him. Thus Abdur Rahman did not feel safe. By then he had been approached by his community, scattered here and there, to lead them. By organising them properly under his

leadership he would find a new world, a new country come under his heels. In southern Spain, his grandfather had left him enough landed property for the services to the Caliphate he would render one day as a prince by blood.

Salim, the guide sent to help him, he found, was not a dependable person.

Therefore Abdur Rahman fell back upon Badr, who had already proved his worth in his escape. He had clear and far-reaching plans.

Having moved to Morocco by now, from there he sent Badr on a very important mission across the Straits, near Spain. There were two friendly regiments stationed there. Their men had been supporters of the Ummeyads. Badr was to plead for

exiled Abdur Rahman's case with them for their help.

Abdur Rahman sent the leaders of the regiments a cleverly-worded letter. It stated that he was Caliph Hisham's grandson. Moreover, he had got landed property allotted to him in Spain by the late Caliph. As such they might well have him as their natural leader at least there, in Spain. He added that in case they recognised him as their overlord—sovereign, he would grant them grand titles and awards. The Governor of North Africa had held out many dreadful threats to him, something which had to be avenged, the Ferhites, the ruling clan, must be punished for it. The enemy was still after him.

Afraid for his life, Abdur Rahman again fled, this time to Tahrat,

the capital of Zanatah Berbers, the most important tribes of the race. They were neutral in politics as well as religion. They welcomed Abdur Rahman. It was not far from Spain. It was probably from there that Abdur Rahman went to Spain. Badr acted as his sole messenger and negotiator.

But Abdur Rahman had to spend many anxious months to hear the fateful outcome of Badr's talks with the two commanders of the regiments whose help he wanted for carrying out his future plans.

Being a cloudy city, Tahrat is a gloomy place. One yearns to see the sun. After getting rather hopeless, through the mist at sea Abdur Rahman saw a ship heave in sight. It had brought the over-happy Badr. Bursting with joy to give the biggest

news of his life to his master, he could not wait for the ship to touch the port. He plunged from it into the sea and swam ashore to inform his master that he had succeeded in the mission of getting the regiments' support. Not only this; a powerful military leader, Tammam Abu Ghalib had come in person to offer Abdur Rahman the kingship of Spain. The following interesting dialogue between them is reported to have taken place:-

Abdur Rahman first of all asked his name.

"Tammam (or the perfecter)," he replied.

"And your nickname?"

"Abu Ghalib (Father of conqueror)."

"Tis a good omen, we shall conquer with it." Though it was a

gamble, the Syrian visitor thought it worthwhile to take. Their meeting concluded with Abdur Rahman naming Tammam as his Prime Minister, a post he held till his death. He was succeeded by Yusuf Ibn-Bakht. Having had the honour of enjoying the patronage of the Ummeyads, he was all the more attached to Abdur Rahman. For the Arabs prize such relationships.

Badr had achieved some other remarkable successes in getting his master maximum help. He got the promise of backing of both Yusuf and his lieutenant, Sumayl.

Badr proved to be very clever because he distributed one-fourth of the money Yusuf gave him among their supporters, purchasing a ship with the rest. It was on this ship that

Abdur Rahman travelled to Spain and succeeded in landing there. By this time he had got increasing support. Yemenites and south Arabs came to his help because they came to know that the Ummeyads had been most cruelly treated by their enemies. As Abdur Rahman was the last living prince of that great house, he must be helped. As a result a large number of Yusuf's army deserted him to his great surprise and gathered under Abdur Rahman's colours.

When Yusuf was returning to his capital, Cordoba, his wife sent him a letter informing him that Abdur Rahman had reached Spain and was organising his forces near Granada. Yusuf could not believe it at first, but when this news was confirmed,

he set about defending the capital. For all knew that if it fell, Spain would pass into the hands of the intruder—Abdur Rahman. Hence it was a fight for mastery, overlordship of Spain. That was in September, 755.

CHAPTER IV

THE SUN RISES

The Syrians bought a ship for Abdur Rahman that became his great rank and honourable position. Tammam, who had recognised him as the sovereign of Spain, was the captain of this ship. It was like shouldering his high office of being Abdur Rahman's Prime Minister which he held till his death. The ship was manned by eleven Syrians. A kind of enemy had clung to it, not leaving it until his grasping hand was chopped off.

Right from the beginning Abdur Rahman had proved his honesty by paying every one his due. Before

leaving the African port of Ghazah, he paid quit-fee to the Berbers among whom he had stayed till then.

September 15, 755 was a red-letter day in the history of both Abdur Rahman and Spain. For on that day he landed on its coast between Almunecar, near Motril after eleven days' journey. Two high-ranking Syrian officers welcomed him there offering him a befitting welcome. Thereafter when they offered him most delicious wine, Abdur Rahman courteously refused, saying, "I want to keep my head clear now, not befuddle it."

He gave a similar reply when a slave-girl was offered to entertain him during his overnight stay in the castle of Fontin.

The twenty-six-year old prince was

removed to another place the next day. There he met a number of Ummeyad and Yemenite leaders. Welcomed and hailed by all, he was able to raise an army of twenty thousand strong supporters. More poured in, joining his colours, so that he inflicted the first defeat in his first battle with the governor of Elvira.

Frightened by the newcomer Abdur Rahman's popularity and power, both Yusuf and Sumayl used some interesting tactics to buy him off. At first they threatened to use great force against him asking him to give up. When this trick failed, they offered him not only the hand of Yusuf's daughter in marriage but also immediate gifts. These consisted of a rich costume, two slaves, two horses, two mules, and five hundred gold

pieces, plus a costume, a horse and a hundred gold pieces for Badr. They then poisoned his ears against Badr. And, to top all, they offered him governorship of Elvira and Malaga and granted him his right to enjoy the landed property he had been allotted in Spain by Caliph Walid.

By then winter had set in. Snow, deep snow and blizzards prevented Abdur Rahman from launching his war of conquest.

In March, 756 when the snows melted, he immediately moved on, being welcomed on the way. The gates of castles and cities were opened for him when he reached Archidona, the then capital of Regio, also called Malaga. Its governor proclaimed him Amir of Spain. From there he marched on to the famous capital of Seville, where he was detained as a

royal guest for two months, winning more followers. Then, after ten years, he met Countess Sara again.

Countess Sara was a very bold, attractive and impressive Gothic princess. Ten years ago, she had undertaken a long journey by sea and land to Damascus to appeal to Caliph Hisham for the redress of a wrong done to her by his high official at Seville. The upright Caliph had welcomed his Christian subject, and decided the case in her favour as she was in the right. Happy with the Caliph's decision, she had married an eminent Muslim, had two sons from him, and returned home along with them and her husband. Thus she was related to Abdur Rahman. Sara's husband died when Abdur Rahman arrived in Spain. She remarried another distinguished Muslim, though

she had a soft corner for Abdur Rahman. An interesting romantic story has been woven around the two.

Since the two had met before in the court at Damascus, they knew each other. As their contact was revived, the countess, held in great respect as she was, came to have free access to Amir Abdur Rahman's palace. She helped him in strengthening his position and winning him a large number of adherents.

Day by day Abdur Rahman was getting more supporters, thus swelling his army. Soon he learnt that Yusuf the Firhite, one of his two main enemies and rivals, was marching out to give him battle near the river Guadalquivir. Abdur Rahman did not let the grass grow under his feet. Already itching for fight, he ordered out his army,

first holding its march-past. The like of such grand, colourful show had never been seen before. Wearing bright, flaming and attractive, coloured fluttering dresses, their horses also gaily caparisoned, it was a grand spectacle. To distinguish Abdur Rahman's army from the enemy's, one of his lieutenants tied a white turban to a lance-head, while another climbed up an olive tree. He set it atop this tree so that it fluttered in the breeze blowing between these two neighbouring trees. This was regarded as a sign of good luck, and so it really proved.

Abdur Rahman as well as Yusuf wanted to make a surprise attack on each other, the former being more quick and dodging. They reached the banks of the river, clearly viewing each other's movements. They gave

an impression of false movement along the bank. The river being in flood, they could not cross it to meet for an engagement or attack.

Abdur Rahman used the trick of leaving the camp fires burning, but secretly moving his troops away under the cover of darkness. Yusuf was keeping an eye on such movements, so that he moved his troops accordingly till the two reached Rio Bembozar, also called Nevalo. But nearly 4,000 Yemenites and Ummeyads of Cordoba of the enemy city deserted to Abdur Rahman's side at night. The flood was ebbing. The enemy then held an important meeting whether or not to cross the river and have a fight with Abdur Rahman's forces.

Spain was then facing a six-year famine resulting partly from bad rule

and partly from neglect of the land due to constant quarrels among rival Muslim parties of Spain. As a result of it food was hard to come by, the soldiers living on grass peas. Fortunately, Eid-i-Qurban drew near so that sacrificial animals became available. Thus the soldiers were able to get enough provisions.

For Abdur Rahman the great occasion, occurring on May 15, 756, came as a great reminder of the same day of victory of Mu'awiya, the first Ummeyad Caliph, had scored over Ali. For Abdur Rahman it was a momentous day to give battle to the enemy.

Yusuf was afraid of him in his heart of hearts. Seeing the desertions in his ranks, he tried to tempt back his former adherents to rejoin him by promising them rich food and

provisions. In view of his own comparatively poor resources in this respect, Abdur Rahman had earlier attempted to open talks with Yusuf for settling the quarrel between them peacefully.

As the talks failed, Abdur Rahman firmly decided to give battle. He became sure that he would be able to repeat the victory of Mu'awiya at Marj Rahat. He planned to cross the river to meet the enemy in the plain near Musara. In order to inspire his forces, he addressed them in these words:

"Tomorrow is Friday and the Feast of Sacrifices. The opposing forces and the Ummeyads on one hand, and the Firhites on the other; the sons of Qays arrayed against the tribes of Yemen. Let this day be the same as that of Marj Rahat."

Before the battle the young prince rode about, mounted on a fiery war horse. Meanwhile he heard a rumour in the camp that he had selected the speedy horse so that he might easily escape from the battle in case he lost it.

Thereupon he yelled out:- "Isn't there a quiet mule in the army which I might ride? I cannot use my bow on this horse". Before long an old grey-coloured mule, called Kawab or "Star", was found for the prince. He gladly changed over to it. After thus convincing his followers of his self-confidence and determination to stick to the battle-field, he revealed the cruel and kind aspects of mind. He ordered that Yusuf's secretary be put to death in case they lost the battle but pardoned in case they won it. A far-sighted,

wise decision it was, since when Abdur Rahman won the battle, he had his old Syrian loyal follower Ubaid-Ullah exchanged for Khalid, the secretary, as the former had been taken prisoner by the enemy. He was first the leader of a Yemenite regiment in Spain to promise support to Abdur Rahman.

Yusuf seemed to have planned a cavalry battle. Strangely enough, Abdur Rahman ordered his Syrian followers to get off the horse and fight around him. He placed the Yemenites on his right, the Berbers on his left. Ubaid-Ullah acted as the standard-bearer.

Yusuf, for his part, matched this move by disposing his best cavalry, consisting of the Murdites, on his left to face the Yemenites and his infantry around the centre. Abdur

Rahman at once detected it as the enemy's weakest point. The cream of his central cavalry having dismounted, he ordered it to attack the enemy who was completely routed.

Now panic seized the enemy. Yusuf tried to flee to the city—Cordoba, but found the road to it blocked. Sumayl tried to capture Abdur Rahman alive but failed to do so. So he fled the field. Yusuf managed to save his life with great difficulty and escaped to his far away friends around Toledo.

Then followed plunder of the city and palace of Cordoba by Abdur Rahman's forces. It was very difficult to control the wild Arabs. A very strong hand, that of a sensible, understanding person, was required to control them. Otherwise they were used to overthrow their leader.

This is what exactly happened when Abdur Rahman stopped his followers from plundering Cordoba. Not only this; Abu-as-Sabah of Yakib tribe, who had detained and entertained Abdur Rahman lavishly at Seville for two months and extended him large support, plotted to kill him—that "beardless youth"—and replace him.

But Abdur Rahman did not believe this report blindly. He investigated the charge against Abu-as-Sabah thoroughly because he did not want to punish him unjustifiably. From this inquiry he found that it was correct. Yet Abdur Rahman appointed the accused governor of Seville again to try his loyalty.

Ten years later, Abu-as-Sabah ungrateful and treacherous as he was, caused a small rising against Abdur Rahman. This aroused the latter's

old suspicion that he was his secret enemy who was really dangerous. But Abdur Rahman again kept quiet till one night his palace guards put Abu-as-Sabah to death. Abdur Rahman so cleverly got rid of his enemy that none suspected that it was, in fact, as a punishment for his ten-year old conspiracy. In this way Abdur Rahman was able to dispose of his rivals firmly and in a friendly way. None would thereby suspect him to be revengeful or weak.

When Abdur Rahman, the conqueror of Cordoba, reached the palace of the governor, he permitted the advance party to ransack the wardrobes. Seeing him in the palace, Yusuf's wife and two daughters surrounded him, appealing, "O cousin, treat us as God has treated you generously." This appeal had the re-

quired effect since the conqueror sent for the Pesh-imam, the head of the mosque there, entrusting the women-folk of the royal household to his care, allowing them three days to gather their things from the palace.

It was during this period that Abdur Rahman met his beloved, Berber girl Hovera, who bore him Hisham, the former's heir, some months later.

Then came the great moment. The day being Friday, Abdur Rahman led the congregational prayer as the spiritual head of his new subjects, proclaiming himself most seriously the ruler of Spain. He offered from the pulpit, special thankful prayers to God promising to rule all with justice, treating them equally without any distinction of creed, class or race.

But Yusuf and Sumayl were still to be finally disposed of by Abdur Rahman in order to put the country on an even keel.

Yusuf and Sumayl made their last attempt to drive out Abdur Rahman. This was despite his kind attitude towards Yusuf's family from whom the Yemenites, particularly Abu-As-Sabah, wanted to take personal revenge and plunder it to their hearts' content.

After Abdur Rahman had left Cordoba with a small garrison for its defence under a newly-appointed governor, Abu Zaid, Yusuf's son made a surprise attack following Abdur Rahman's departure. As a result of it the governor fled the city. Abu Zaid sacked it cruelly unlike Abdur Rahman, so much so that he dishonoured some female

members of Abdur Rahman's household. Even Abu Zaid's followers protested against such inhuman treatment. Abdur Rahman never forgot it.

When Abdur Rahman came to know of the recapture of Cordoba, he hurried back to drive out the enemy. But on reaching there he found that they had fled it after looting it. Both Yusuf and Sumayl escaped to Almunecar, the little Spanish port on which Abdur Rahman had first set his foot. The enemy had played the double game of blocking Abdur Rahman's escape-route in case they were defeated and using it themselves in case the tables were turned on them—they lost the final battle with him.

But Abdur Rahman was too strong and able a general for them. He drove Yusuf from Almunecar,

forcing him to retreat in the district of Granada, thereby inflicting the most crushing defeat on him. Thereupon Sumayl laid down his arms advising Yusuf to give up his title to Abdur Rahman.

Ever generous to his enemy, in July 756 Abdur Rahman laid down such terms for his opponents. Accordingly, he permitted Yusuf to retain his landed property but he was to hand over to him two of his sons as hostages. Having been impressed by Sumayl, he employed him as his army officer. Both were, however, confined to Cordoba.

And to Cordoba he again went, and formally ! This time the three of them went on mules, with Yusuf to the conqueror's right and Sumayl to his left.

On reaching Cordoba, Abdur Rahman granted general pardon to his enemies, forbidding his men as well as others to seek revenge from Yusuf and Sumayl in any way.

CHAPTER V

A NEW ORDER

Every one who visited Spain fell in love with it. Like a many-coloured flower, its colours were also many. The Spanish contemporary historian Abu Ubaid-Ullah thus praised it:

"Spain resembles Syria in her pure air, Yemen for her temperate climate, India for her drugs and perfumes, Persia for her revenues, China for her metals and precious stones, Hazramaut for her coasts and harbours, and Greece for the wisdom of her sages."

Abdur Rahman was most careful and cautious from the very outset

not to let such a country slip from his grasp.

To secure his position he set himself the big task of governing the country properly so that it might develop and progress. He took some most thoughtful steps.

First, he did not call himself king of Spain, though he was so in fact. He rested content with being known as its governor. Unlike Yusuf, who had, in his turn, followed Musa's son Abdul Aziz, Abdur Rahman did not want to come in conflict with the Abbasid Caliph, the chief of the Muslim world.

Secondly, one year after the birth of Hisham, his son, and setting up his government, Abdur Rahman invited all his living kith and kin, distant supporters and well-wishers

at home to come to Spain. He did so to have a dependable set of people around him. Among such arrivals the most remarkable of all was his son Sulaiman, now sixteen years old. It was Sulaiman, who had come frightened as a four-year-old child on seeing the black-bannered Abbasid enemy and helped save his father's life from him. He had come alone, his aunts failing to undertake the long and tiresome journey all along the Mediterranean.

Thirdly, Abdur Rahman realised the importance of a standing army for the defence of the country. Also, that it must be subject to his command, ever ready to obey his order. For this purpose he gave the Syrians central position, the core of the army. Side by side with them he raised another division of his own

comprising hired Berber soldiers. Being mercenaries and paid by him, they were politically neutral, fighting for their master on his order. Many of them were previously slaves, set free by Abdur Rahman. He further strengthened his position by having Negroes for his personal guard.

Only a person like Abdur Rahman could think of and put into practice his most amazing reforms that changed the face of Spain in every aspect.

As a result of Muslim conquest of Spain by Tariq Ibn Ziad in 711, the original class of its nobles—the Visigoths—and Hispano Roman clergy, which occupied very high status and power, were levelled down. Yet far greater and sweeping levelling remained to be done to improve the common man's lot. Fair taxation was the first step in this direction. Abdur

Rahman exempted four classes from unjustified taxes. These were : (1) all women and children, (2) the aged and resourceless, (3) the religious order, and (4) the disabled and permanently sick.

Abdur Rahman revised the system of taxation altogether so as to make it fair and payable by those who were regarded as taxable. Till then taxes had been thoughtlessly levied. Being very heavy, they were back-breaking. Therefore he adjusted their scale according to the individual's capacity. In this regard he divided the taxable classes into three categories: (1) Agriculturists. This class being the mainstay of the country, the peasant was taxed in proportion to the produce of his soil. The previous system was cruel because, irrespective of the peasant's capacity to pay, whether his

land had yielded any produce or not, he must pay. As the result of Abdur Rahman's reform the Spanish Christians gained most because of their being in majority.

(2) The Jews and Christians had to pay Jazya or poll-tax according to the individual's capacity to pay. This was as an exemption from compulsory military service by the non-Muslims. Further, unlike before, they were allowed to dispose of their property.

(3) Certain classes, mentioned earlier, were altogether exempted from paying tax.

Abdur Rahman's sweeping reforms touched every aspect of the country. He took such an advanced step regarding granting special rights and powers to municipalities as were

cancelled by Christian rulers of Spain eight or ten centuries later. These rights and privileges were equally enjoyable by the Christian and Jewish communities. But he seized the poperty of nobles and clergymen who had fled the country.

Abdur Rahman had a most keen understanding of political and human affairs too. Being a newcomer, and a Muslim at that, he saw to it that justice was done to all. Knowing the rebellious, rather undependable Arabs, he did not want to lose the sympathies of the non-Muslims, the Christians and Jews. By his fair and honest treatment he won their loyalty, love and respect. By exempting them from Muslim laws, applying them only in case they were found to have violated Muslim

laws, Abdur Rahman gave his non-Muslim subjects unheard of liberty.

He was practical and imaginative enough not to let any person grow too powerful. Fair treatment of non-Muslims was not peculiar to Abdur Rahman since it is enjoined by Islam. Both the preceding and following Muslim rulers of Spain were alive to it. However, Abdur Rahman had a much larger view in honestly following such policy he wanted to ensure peace and prosperity in the country. By protecting the rights of all he achieved it to an amazing degree.

The Jews gained most from his rule. Previously they had been oppressed, particularly under Christian rule. Though many of them were great scholars and writers, they had been slave-traders, too, a practice

forbidden by Islam. As dealers in silk, they traded with Europe and Asia. Under Abdur Rahman's regime they prospered most in commerce and industry. European historians admitted it as a fact.

Abdur Rahman's extraordinary tolerance for which the Muslim Spaniards later suffered a great deal was like the Indian Emperor Akbar's dream of forging unity between different religious communities through different means. Princess Sara was a great influence in this respect since she had both Christian and Muslim ancestors and descendants.

As such there was only one Christian rising during Abdur Rahman's reign, this being the result of the latter's own rivals.

It is worth mentioning that Islam

came to Spain as a welcome influence, a great changing force. The Spanish slaves, land-slaves, Christians and Goths, welcomed it as a progressive religion as well as a liberator. For while the slaves were set free by the Muslim rulers, the Christians thought it to be an equally revealed religion of God—like Christianity—finding it closer to Christianity. Its belief in one God appealed to them as well as the Goths. They practically found it human, not exploiting human beings "as fools or beasts of burden."

Further, the simplicity of Islam appealed to the minds of non-Muslims more than their own faiths because the latter were complicated. Therefore non-Muslims embraced Islam in large numbers of their own accord. The only exception to it were north-western nobles.

The Arabs, for their part, treated Spain as their second home. They loved it, concentrating all their energies on building it into a "populous, cultured and industrious land of all Europe, and (it) remained so for centuries." Not narrow-minded, the Arabs learnt a great deal from the works of ancient rulers of Spain like the Romans, Greeks, and others.

CHAPTER VI

THE SNAKE BITES

By his constructive and peaceful policy Abdur Rahman had strengthened his position all the more.

After building up the defences of the country, he turned to introducing the much wanted agricultural reforms as well as providing training in the manufacturing field. As to the first, better methods of irrigation and cultivation were taught to the natives. Regarding the latter, superior techniques of treating leather were introduced. The spiritual side also received equal attention at his hands. For he built many new mosques, and in a beautiful style, in the

leading cities, Cordoba and Granada being most memorable in history.

But the snake in Yusuf was soon to get out of its hole: after two years of cosy life of confinement in Cordoba where he had been allowed to use his property, he raised his head. Egged on by pre-Abdur Rahman period Arab immigrants to Spain as well as his own advisers, Yusuf marched out of the city to challenge Abdur Rahman's authority as he wanted to snatch it away from him. The Arabs' in-born spirit of independence asserted itself again.

Backed by such rebels, Yusuf gathered twenty thousand supporters at whose head he set out toward Cordoba to reconquer it. But now he was without the steadfast and brave Sumayl's help and advice. Though in the Amir's employ, he

was involved in the rising as his own son deserted to the side of the enemy. Though the latter was caught and thrown into prison along with Yusuf's two sons held in hostage, Sumayl was strangled to death. Interestingly enough, his death was made to look natural as if he had died of over-drinking.

Ever alert and agile of movement like the falcon, being a master of hunting with it as Abdur Rahman was, he quickly turned his army toward Seville to meet the advancing Yusuf. Abdur Rahman knew his wavering nature and could, therefore, anticipate his moves.

Abdur Rahman's cousin, Ibn-Umar, was then governor of the city. He had arrived in Spain only a year before. Most devoted to his cousin—

the Amir—and uncompromising, strong-willed, he was to join forces with him to beat back Yusuf. Here was a most loyal and self-sacrificing, yet outspoken person also who had once threatened to commit suicide if Abdur Rahman did not forbid reading of the 'khutba' in the Caliph's name. Abdur Rahman consented to his appeal.

Ibn-Umar showed his blotless loyalty and dislike of cowardice in meeting Yusuf in battle. Killing ten thousand of his men in one engagement near Seville, he put him to flight. He showed his single-mindedness and hatred of cowardice by ordering his own son to be beheaded for having wavered in opposing the enemy. He so exclaimed on the occasion: "If you think you are

saving your life by acting in such a manner, you are only losing it !''

Yusuf fled in disguise. But one of his companions recognised him, betraying him in order to purchase his own pardon. He killed Yusuf and handed over his head to Abdur Rahman, but the latter had got him executed under the proven belief that traitors are always undependable.

Yusuf's head was nailed to one of the gates of the city as a warning to future rebels. To it was soon added that of his son Abu Zaid who had once insulted his womenfolk.

The Franks, native enemies of the Amir, availed themselves of his pre-occupation by recapturing Narbonne.

Two uprisings—one at Seville, the other at Alcazar of Toledo—next year, were ruthlessly suppressed by the Amir. The head of the old rebel Hisham's son was cut off and fixed up on a walls of Toledo. This was meant to show how firm and unsparing this man of peace could be with his enemies in case of betrayal. But Hisham was a very hard nut to crack. Though besieged in the capital by Badr and Tammam, the infuriated Abdur Rahman refused to let it be raised even during winter against the common practice. However, he was prevailed upon to let off the insurgent on peaceful terms. This showed his essentially peaceful nature. How this great statesman could ruthlessly deal with his opponents, wipe them out root and branch, struck terror into their

hearts, was shown when he had to meet greater threats : One was external, posed by the Abbasid, the other internal resulting from the civil war which broke out after it. A few glimpses from this dramatic period will interest the reader.

In 762 the Abbasid emperor, the founder of glorious Baghdad, directed his governor of North Africa, to conquer Spain for him. The Abbasid empire was at the height of its glory. The emperor Abu Jafar al-Mansur and his grandson, Harun-ar-Rashid, a contemporary of the famous European king Charlemagne, are famous in history, particularly the former, who features in "One thousand and one Nights." Ibn-al-Mughith, the governor, had a personal grudge against Abdur Rahman also because he was relative of Yusuf the Fihrite.

He caused a revolt against Abdur Rahman on the pretext of his having different religious views and being a rebel against the caliphate. The trick worked for the time being. As a result Ibn Mughith landed on the Spanish coast at a place now forming southern Portugal. With the help of Hisham he made a surprise attack on Carmona where he besieged Abdur Rahman.

Abdur Rahman's fearless Arab blood boiled up. Burning his scabbard, he rushed out with his naked sword. Addressing his men in these words, he inspired them to burn their scabbards also: "We have to defend the bread we trudged from Syria to secure! What's the use of scabbards when it's a matter of life and death!" This was like Tariq burning his boats. Leading seven

hundred of his besieged soldiers who threw their scabbards into fire, he made such a furious charge at the enemy that he cut his way through the siege. Seven thousand enemy soldiers were cut down at Badajoz by the Amir's irresistible cavalry. And at last Ibn-Umar got hold of the old rebel Hisham and put him to death. Abdur Rahman's son Sulaiman ably fought side by side with his father in this critical battle.

Abu-Mughith found a yet more terrible end. For his and his captains' heads were cut off and preserved and sent to Caliph Mansur with the account of their defeat at Badjoz attached to them. These were unrolled on the carpet before the Caliph as he sat in his court. Abdur Rahman had rightly avenged himself for all Abbasids had done to him and his

family all along. It was a characteristic Arab revenge. The bundle containing the decapitated head had this written warning enclosed in it:-

"'Thus 'Abdur Rahman Ibn-Mu'awiya Ibn-Ummeya Punishes Rash Persons Like Al-Ala' Ibn-Mughith, The Governor of Qayrwan!"

On reading it Mansur was terror-stricken. He exclaimed: "'This man is the very devil indeed! Praise be to God who placed the sea between us and such a foe !" Mansur called him the "'Falcon of the Quraish." This "'falcon" made Spain independent of the Caliph's over-all control.

But Abdur Rahman was not to rest content with frustrating Mansur's attempt to overthrow him. He too wanted to teach him a lesson by

invading Syria. Before attempting it he decided to raise a standing army of Berbers he had had in mind ever since he took power. To snatch Syria from the Abbasids he ordered building of a navy, realising that it was most important for coastal defence of the country from any Eastern enemy. His ambition to invade Syria, his mother-country for which he naturally felt sick, was not fulfilled. His still greater ambition of regaining the Caliphate did not bear fruit for, as authorities observe, he could not do so without capturing both Mecca and Medina first.

Another uprising at Toledo, the continuous trouble spot till then, distracted his attention. Badr and Tammam were able to force its surrender. Abdur Rahman gave exemplary punishment to the rebels.

There were some revolts here and there in that period, but they were effectively put down, with their leaders killed. Abu-as-Sabah was one of them. But his ghost, as it were, was to disturb peace of the country for nearly nine years, from 768 till 777.

Abu-as-Sabah had a young, warrior cousin, named Abd-al-Ghafir Ibn-Hamid the Yahsabi. In order to avenge his uncle's death, the latter invaded Spain until he was beaten back by the Prefect of Seville. Though he fled the field, he continued his raids for six years. He succeeded in getting the support of a large number of Yemenites and Berbers. He waited for a large enforcement from north Africa in his final bid for power. He got it late under the command of Abdur Rahman

Ibn-Habib. For Abdur Rahman's Mediterranean fleet he had ordered to be built earlier, with Tammam as its Amirulbehr, called Admiral by Europeans, in order to repel the Slav. It showed the Amir's remarkable farsightedness in building a strong coastal defence. For his fleet burnt the enemy's ships. It was the first fleet of its kind in Europe.

The situation had been complicated by war between the Berbers and the Arabs. It was due to intolerant religious outlook of a section of the former and the latter's jealousy of their power. Now Abdur Rahman showed his remarkable diplomatic skill in two ways. First, he won over the Berbers through his influential hosts who had given him protection in North Africa during his escape from the Abbasids. He appealed to them

as half-Berber since his mother was one. Secondly, he bought off a large number of them, nearly forty thousand. So that such supporters of Abdul Ghafir deserted him at the eleventh hour, crossing over to Abdur Rahman's army on the former's horses they got from him on some pretext.

At one stage Abdur Rahman had to lead an attack himself in support of the brave Ibn-Umar, his cousin. Ibn-Umar showed amazing tactics in fighting back Abdur Ghafir. As a result of it Abdur Rahman asked for the hand of his daughter for his third son.

When peace at last returned to the country, Abdur Rahman turned his attention to having a larger

standing army of Berbers. He had them recruited from North Africa as mercenaries. He also strengthened the defence of Cordoba. He caused many public buildings and beautiful mosques to be built at important places.

CHAPTER VII

STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT

In order to secure peace in the country so that it might develop to an unprecedented extent, a strong central government was necessary.

Abdur Rahman lost no time in setting up such a government, headed by himself. He was the absolute-ruler of the country. He was assisted by a prime minister who, in his turn, had a council of ministers. They were drawn from the nobility, religious order and highly-placed palace officials. Later this very council turned into the senate of Cordoba. The ministers had secretaries to attend to the details of their depart-

mental work. As in modern times, the ministers were in charge of ministries, those of army, finance and the interior being the important of all.

The names of some of such office-bearers are most interesting. For some of them have survived even up to modern times. The ruler was called Amir, the ministers Divans, the leaders Shaikhs, and so on, as will be seen later.

In view of the large size of the country it was divided into provinces, each placed under a Wali, a word current in Pakistan even now. The Wali was equivalent of modern governor. He combined civil and military powers. As against it the cities were managed by prefects or Quaids. The countries were divided into fourteen provinces.

Justice was also given great importance. That was why Abdur Rahman introduced some memorable reforms in its administration. Although being the ruler he was the supreme judge, he assigned this function to a special official, called Qazi-ul-quzzat or "judge of judges" The Qazi of the court of Cordoba was the chief justice of the country. While the Amir handled cases of special importance, it was the chief justice who decided the other appeals.

Cordoba had a special judge, known as Sahib-ul-Madina. He lived near the royal palace, promptly handling day-to-day cases as city magistrate, called "master of the city". Abdur Rahman appointed wealthy persons as judges because they were less likely to be corrupt compared

with the relatively poor. This judge had special powers of enforcing fair trade deals, punishing those who cheated others. He also dealt with gambling or other evil practices.

Junior magistrates were known as Hakims.

Standard weights and measures were prescribed. In this connection it is worth mentioning that coins were made of three metals, namely gold, silver and copper. These were so beautifully designed that the European nations made theirs after these models. Spanish currency was so stable and rich because of the wealth of the country that no other country could compare it in respect of cash, the amount available in its treasury.

It was in the field of commerce and industry that Spanish currency

proved its international worth. Spain conducted vast trade with Europe, Africa and even many Asian countries. The figs of Malaga were popular as far away as China due to their most delicious quality. Their special Spanish exports were of oil, wine, lumber, marble, silk, pepper, cotton, antimony. Leather and woodworks of Spain were of such high quality that they were in great demand from the outside world.

Slave trade by European countries with Spain had special importance. No doubt it was a bad practice, but Abdur Rahman gave a new pattern to it. For he purchased the male slaves, specially Berbers, enlisted them in his army as free individuals: he let them serve as free men. By the way, the word slave is derived from "Slav," as this commodity was

then called. It was not so much Abdur Rahman as his grandson, Hashim, who raised such a Slavic army.

But Abdur Rahman made Spain famous by his other peaceful achievements. They were many-sided. Apart from progress in gold workmanship, leather goods, mining, carpet-making, glasswork, ceramics or pottery; rice, sugar and cotton plantation; it was in architecture, gardening and irrigation that he did wonders. Postponing discussion of the amazing example of unique beauty in Cordoba, the glorious mosques he built, in the last two—gardening and irrigation—he created a revolution.

He introduced different plants and flowers from the east to adorn Spanish gardens, especially the palace.

Seeds and cuttings were imported and used for adding to the beauty of Spain. So also fruits unknown to the country were introduced by him.

To nourish the land he brought about a revolution in the system of its irrigation, called the Arabs' greatest blessing to Spanish agriculture. He introduced the floodgates, water-wheels, pumps whose designs were taken from the originals used in Mesopotamia and Egypt. He established special water-courts for deciding water-disputes. All these showed his great genius for bringing a new civilisation to the country. But, unfortunately, this mighty task he had taken upon himself was interrupted by trumpets of war.

CHAPTER VIII

CORDOBA AND OTHER GLORIES

Due to Abbasid jealousy Spain was in danger of outside attack from them or an inside one from their friends. When severely beaten by Abdur Rahman in their first attempt to conquer Spain, the Caliphs did not dare to repeat it afterwards. However, they wanted to destroy Abdur Rahman. To this end they sought western alliance. They were prepared to go to any length to remove their rival from that part of the world, as the result of which they chose Abdur Rahman's European rival. In Charles the Great the Abbasids found a suitable weapon. Charles's father, Pepin

the Short, had taken advantage of Abdur Rahman's military pre-occupations some years earlier, in 752, by snatching those parts of France which had been captured by Muslims earlier. Only Narboune was left with the Spanish after it. The capture of the later by the Christians was in shocking contrast to Muslim conquerors' conduct. For the Franks "put most Muslims to the sword regardless of their age or sex", an act totally forbidden in Islam and never done by any Muslim conqueror.

For nearly five years—from 774-78—the Amir remained pre-occupied in facing three enemies. As such the Abbasid Caliph started secret negotiations with the Frankish king, Charlemagne, to attack Spain. The Caliph won over some Arab enemies of Abdur Rahman in Spain to join

hands with the Christian invader. On his part Charlemagne had defeated the Germanic king. After causing him to flee to Denmark, his old ambition to conquer Spain as well as Christianise it revived. Though he succeeded in crossing into Spain from north-east, the Arabs suddenly turned against him. For they realised that it was with an enemy of Islam that they had wrongly sided against their own king. By inflicting a humiliating defeat on him they forced his army to leave Spain. That was the second enemy.

The third enemy the Caliph had instigated against the Amir was the governor of the Spanish province of Barcelona. Abdur Rahman succeeded in putting down his revolt also. Thereafter he became free enough to devote himself fully to making Spain

great, and his reign one of the most memorable in world history.

Cordoba was the greatest love of Abdur Rahman among the Spanish cities. He used his great artistic imagination, fondness for beauty, grandeur and practical sense in making it into what the Arabs poetically called the "Bride of al-Andalus"—the great sunny south. A dream, model city it, indeed, was. For it was rightly called the first city of contemporary Europe and was 700 years ahead of its own in being modern. Before giving some of its wonderful features, let us have a brief look at its history.

Cordoba was an ancient city. The Semites would call it the "Good City". Under the Romans also it had the position of a major city. It was famous for producing great men also

like Senecas and Lucan ; one of the Senecas was the famous Roman philosopher-dramatist, the second, a distinguished Christian priest. Lucan was the well-known poet, prose-writer. In its Muslim period the city produced many luminaries like Ibn-Masarrah, Ibn-Rushd known as Averroes to the West, Maimoionides, the poet of feelings and sensations. Later on also, Cordoba continued this tradition of giving eminent poets to the world.

The tender and experienced hands of the intruder—Abdur Rahman—carved it into "jewel of a city," as a contemporary German nun exclaimed when some one mentioned it to her. He gave it dignity and strength, like what he himself was.

But, first of all, he arranged for its sufficient water-supply. He had a new channel for it made under his

own supervision. The water was obtained by it direct from the neighbouring mountain. Apart from drinking purpose, water was used for ablution, keeping the city clean and nourishing the rich gardens laid out in it as well as the palace. Being a godly person, abstinent, even leading the Friday prayers sometimes, the Amir acted on the Quranic injunction of cleanliness for which water is necessary.

He gave the city an international look in many ways. Spain was made up of many races : Arabs, Franks and Slavs, Berbers and Greeks, Negroes, Hispano-Romans and Goths. Abdur Rahman wanted to knit them into one nation. One could see them all jostling against each other in the cosmopolitan city of Cordoba. In its streets one could hear the

"Christian bell, the Jewish trumpet, and the Muslim call-to-prayer." Then people following different vocations—doctors, lawyers, traders, students, peasants, artisans and so on—were seen moving about in this cosmopolitan city.

Abdur Rahman built public baths and open parks, hospitals and schools, the last two being helped by the government.

While raising new structures he repaired the old ones also. The seven gates of the city, opening in different directions, were named after the city they led to. They were rebuilt, as also the Roman bridge, strengthened the city's surrounding wall. He was the first to introduce street lighting in Europe, the latter following it 700 years later.

Abdur Rahman's greatest artistic achievement was the great Cordova Mosque, the one which inspired poet Iqbal to compose his well-known long poem applauding the incomparable architectural beauty of the mosque and the unique achievements of Moorish rule in Spain.

Abdur Rahman bought this site of an ancient Roman temple, later converted into a Christian church, from the Christians. Having to utilise half of the original, he acquired it by peaceful means for a sum of 100,000 gold pieces. He granted Christians the privilege of repairing the old ancient places of worship and ringing their church bells. They built another beautiful church with the amount paid by the Amir.

The Amir prepared the original plan of the mosque with his own

hand. It was a forest of pillars and double arches. In its centre it had a fountain. Rows upon rows of trees were so planted outside it that they merged with the arches. It was also a unique work of inspiration, imagination and height of human building skill. That was why when after the conquest of Spain by the Christians the priest of Cordoba made some major alterations in it, King Charles V was shocked at it. On seeing it changed, he exclaimed, "I did not know you wanted to touch the ancient portion: you have ruined something irreplaceable to give me something I can find anywhere!"

This "jewel of the world", a city which had 200,000 houses and hundreds of public baths and schools, was plundered many times after. But Abdur Rahman's work still imp-

resses one with its beauty, though it is tarnished by time.

Apart from his great contribution in the field of architecture, his revolutionary influence found expression in arts and crafts, astronomy, medicine, chemistry, geography, history, literature, education, and other spheres also. Under his inspiration, guidance and patronage great men of learning and scholarship not only translated the works of Aristotle and Plato and passed them on to Europe but also wrote remarkable commentaries on them. That is, the Hispano-Arab introduced Greek thought to the west. Such was Spain that led the way to Renaissance.

Abdur Rahman's court attracted eminent scholars, irrespective of their creed or nationality. The spirit

of free inquiry encouraged by him gave rise to thinkers like Ibn Rushd (Averroes) and, centuries later, to Francis Bacon, William Ockham and others in England. Spain became, in course of time, the centre of early experiments in science, especially chemistry; in medicine new medicines were made and experimented with. Geography was turned into a science. Its experts prepared maps and wrote books on the climate, people and produce of different lands. To top all, the science of navigation advanced so much that the works of Spanish writers were looked upon as authoritative.

The patronage of eminent poets reached an equally great extent. For the Arabs loved poetry and music, both so blending with the Spanish ones that they deeply affected those

of Europe. The story of Abu-al-Makhsi's award is worth mentioning. He was a great poet who wrote some verse in praise of Abdur Rahman's eldest son, Sulaiman. But the supporters of his step-brother Hisham blinded him for it. However the poet continued to write poetry. The Amir awarded him double the amount legally sanctioned for losing both eyes. When Hisham became the king instead of Sulaiman, he also awarded the poet for his outstanding literary work.

The encouragement of writers, scholars, philosophers, thinkers and so on gave rise, later, to many universities in Spain. These served as the model of the subsequent European ones. The Cordoba law school may well be mentioned in passing because of its international fame. One

of its lawyers was a Negro who had joined it as a scholar of Hadith.

Abdur Rahman himself sometimes composed verses. Some of them are memorable, those on the Palm generally, quoted for their pathos. He had, among many plants, got the palm planted in his palace-garden. The short poem he wrote in memory of his home runs as follows:

> O palm, thou art a stranger in the West,
> Far from thy Orient home, like me imblest.
> Weep! But thou canst not. Dumb, dejected tree
> Thou art not made to sympathise with me.
> Ah, thou wouldst weep, if thou hadst tears to pour,
> For thy companions on Euphrates' shore;
> But yonder tall groves thou remembrest not,
> So I, in hating foes, have my old friends forgot

But Abdur Rahman's peaceful activities were finally disturbed by some more and sensational revolts. The most infuriating of these for Abdur Rahman was led by Husain Ibn-Yahya, the governor of Zaragoza. A treacherous person, he proclaimed himself Abbasid Amir of Spain, of course at the instigation of the Caliph of Baghdad. The latter had been at the back of most of the Ferhite and Berber risings against Abdur Rahman. However he so quickly moved out and crushed Husain's sedition that within a week of learning of it he captured him, having his and his accomplice's heads impaled as exemplary punishment for others.

Abdur Rahman's appreciation of the brave and forgiving them on this

account even when they later raised their heads against him is worth mentioning here. One such warrior was al-Qa'qa. He had made his mark in a battle by getting off the horse and engaging the enemy on foot. On giving him the rich reward of a thousand dinars and giving him a prominent position, he declared:

"'Most men cannot dismount to fight, but we do. The real warrior fights on foot''.

Another serious revolt staged against him was by the Firhite Muhammad Abu-al-Aswad, Yusuf's eldest son, who had been confined in one of the towers of Cordoba as his father had revolted earlier. Pretending to be blind, this handsome, daring and sociable boy escaped and

fought guerilla warfare against the Amir's forces. The latter had to lead an operation against him in person. In it he wiped out 4,000 of the enemy's 6,000 soldiers. Abu-al-Aswad met the strange, horrible end of dying a beggar. His accomplices were subsequently caught and killed.

However Abdur Rahman conquered the whole of Spain after twenty-five years of struggle. Only two parts of it slipped out of his hands in the beginning and for no fault of his.

CHAPTER IX

ABDUR RAHMAN THE MAN

Abdur Rahman was always active, ramaining so till his death in 788. His achievements both as a soldier and as a man of peace point out to those remarkable qualities which enabled him to found an empire, over which his own family ruled for 250 years, and make Spain the envy of the world. A distinguished European historian sums up his comments on Abdur Rahman's rule in these words: "When the great Amir died, in 788, the kingdom of Cordova was already one of the most powerful, and certainly the most enlightened commonwealth in Europe."

As a soldier he was daring, thoughtful, quick of movement and a most capable planner. He appreciated and fully recognised the brave. Though sometimes he was ruthless, striking terror into the heart of the enemy, as he did in the memorable episode of sending the decapitated heads of the agents of the Caliph to him and mercilessly dealt with others, such instances are few and far between. For he generally forgave even his bitterest foes, winning them over by his kindness. Only two incidents, as we shall soon see, show his unusual unkind attitude.

He was forced to exile his brother Walid, along with his family, with a very heavy heart, because his son had got involved in a serious rebellion against him (Abdur Rahman). As a result he had him behea-

ded. But on turning out his brother he was so shocked that he gave him residence in his Rusafah gardens, his beloved, newly-built palace. Thereafter he returned to the old one in Cordoba.

But the extent to which he disgraced his oldest companion Badr on similar grounds is indeed painful. He was reported to have repentantly pleaded: "I followed you across the sea and the desert and won you a kingdom; but yet the Abbasids could not treat me any worse than you have done!"

For Badr to have joined hands against his master was, perhaps, no more justified. But such an exception does not prove Abdur Rahman to be cruel and inhuman like kings in general. One fact is admitted on all hands, that is, he was not blood-

thirsty. However, had he not combined an element of ruthlessness he would not have been able to effectively deal with repeated rebellions against him. As none by his non-Muslim subjects is on record, all being mostly staged by the agents of the Caliph and fanatical Spaniards, mostly converts, Abdur Rahman could not but have regarded his exemplary treatment of the rebels in his own as well the country's interest. For he wished to forge the different people of Spain into one nation.

It also showed his watchfulness, the quality of being even alert, so essential for maintenance of his rule. This quality earned him the nickname of "Falcon of Quraish" by Caliph Mansur.

He used such precaution on the the wider scale of having an efficient

secret service which had advised him not to go unguarded in public. That was why on rare occasions, as attending funerals of some notable or congregation prayers which he sometimes led himself, he appeared in public. Since even in modern democratic countries such practice is followed, it was not odd for a king. Seeing that only one attempt was made on his life in his life-time, one can imagine that he was popular—both with the army and the public. He had no doubt, a soft-corner for his countrymen, the Syrians, "ever ready to welcome any one who, like himself, had been forced by the Abbasid terror to take refuge in Spain."

But he was polite, hospitable and just, a kind of poet too. He welcomed any one to join him in

dinner, as also he was always ready to hear any one's cry for justice. For he administered it with his peculiar large-heartedness. An interesting incident is worth mentioning here.

Once he came across a mule carrying a Chamid rebel. On seeing it he remarked:

"O mule, what a kind of treachery and rebellion you are carrying!"

"O horse, how you are laden with mercy and pardon!" The rebel replied winning pardon thereby.

Tall and slender, he remained tireless and muscular all along due to constant activity. An excellent sportsman and swimmer, a remarkable soldier and superb statesman, in

every walk of life he distinguished himself. He had lost one eye in a battle, but this did not reduce his sharp observation of men and affairs. For he was as wise as he was imaginative. He named Hisham, his third son, as his heir-apparent on this basis. After givingt his question long thought he commented: "Hisham meets with wise men, whereas Sulaiman and Abdullah rejoice in the company of fools," however rewarding the latter governorship of two separate provinces. Fortunately, both remained loyal to him.

A few words about his appearance and dress. He had grown a moustache and beard—scanty by nature. Though he was immensely fond of flowers, his sense of smell was very weak. For his dress he wore white turban, white being the colour

of Sunnite Ummeyads, turban the head-gear of Arab aristocracy.

He would devote most of his time in old age to supervising the construction of the Great Mosque which was completed by his son. It was only in later age that he proclaimed himself Amir of Spain, as Hisham followed him on succeeding him, declaring himself independent of the Caliph. And it was while on an inspection tour of Hisham's province, Merida, that, according to some authorities, he passed away. However others locate it at Cordoba, on September 30, 788, being buried in its gardens. No one can however identify his grave.

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